



Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/ICEF/1998/P/L.4
17 November 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
First regular session 1998
26-28 and 30 January 1998
Item 9 of the provisional agenda*

FOR INFORMATION

SUMMARY OF MID-TERM REVIEWS AND MAJOR EVALUATIONS OF COUNTRY PROGRAMMES

East Asia and Pacific region

SUMMARY

The present report was prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1995/8 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1) which requested the secretariat to submit to the Board a summary of the outcome of mid-term reviews and major country programme evaluations, specifying, *inter alia*, the results achieved, lessons learned and the need for any adjustment in the country programmes. The Board is to comment on the reports and provide guidance to the secretariat, if necessary. As no mid-term reviews were conducted in the East Asia and Pacific region in 1997, the present report describes major evaluations conducted and new initiatives undertaken in programme evaluations in 1996-1997.

INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with the five-year programme cycles of all 13 country programmes in the East Asia and Pacific region, no mid-term reviews were planned nor conducted in 1997. Therefore, the present report (a) makes some observations on monitoring the mid-decade goals and programme evaluations conducted in 1996-1997; (b) reflects on how their findings are being used to improve country programmes of cooperation for children and women; and (c) shares some of the new initiatives undertaken and experience gained in 1997 to strengthen monitoring and evaluation of country programmes in the region. The report indicates how the regional management team (RMT) and the regional office team are providing support to country programmes for improving programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and for strengthening UNICEF capacity in programme evaluation.

* E/ICEF/1998/2.

MULTIPLE INDICATOR CLUSTER SURVEYS: MONITORING THE MID-DECADE GOALS

2. In accordance with the global promotion by UNICEF of the multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS) methodology for assessing countries' achievement of the mid-decade goals, 10 countries in the region have conducted MICS since 1995 with UNICEF assistance. They have reconfirmed earlier indications that some countries had already achieved a number of the goals by the end of 1995 and that most of them were within reach for the region as a whole by 1996. Many among the 10 countries used the MICS sampling techniques and methods of data collection, and some adapted the MICS questionnaires to their own needs. Several benefits have been noted by government partners and UNICEF based on experiences in conducting MICS: (a) statistically sound data have been obtained to verify achievement of the mid-decade goals; (b) in some countries, key child indicators from various data sources and government ministries have been brought together in a coordinated manner; (c) national bodies responsible for social statistics have become partners in country programmes for children; (d) policy makers and programme managers have become more clearly aware of data gaps; and (e) the strengths and weaknesses of existing systems of data collection, and the need to analyse and use data for policy and planning purposes, have been recognized. In several countries, MICS have highlighted disparities within countries by showing how achievement of the goals varies from one province or district to another and have raised awareness of the need to reach marginalized communities while achieving national objectives.

3. The extent to which MICS data have been disseminated among the various audiences has varied. Myanmar, for example, has produced a user-friendly, popular version of the MICS report for a general audience by incorporating an array of maps, charts and photographs showing varying degrees of achievement of the mid-decade goals by states and divisions, and trends over time. The Philippine report recommends, for future consideration, the inclusion of a data dissemination module to produce fact sheets or to highlight significant findings on the MICS results for selected audiences. While some countries have established linkages between national statistics offices and relevant line ministries to generate data for routine administrative reporting, others have been unable to establish such linkages, but will do so in the future. Examples of government acceptance of the MICS-type methodology for monitoring purposes have been noted in the region. A MICS was carried out for a focused analysis in Yunnan Province following an earlier nationwide survey in China; Myanmar plans to conduct surveys every two years; the modules based on the 1996 survey in Indonesia have been incorporated into the annual National Socio-Economic Survey; and a survey using MICS methods will be used in the Philippines in 1998 for assessing the maternal and child health (MCH) programme, supported by the Australian Agency for International Development, and also for selecting areas of the country for focused attention in the next country programme. The Philippine experience could provide an example of using MICS techniques for gathering baseline data for planning, monitoring and evaluation purposes.

4. Based on the encouraging responses of government partners so far in the region, some of the next challenges for UNICEF and its partners in the area of monitoring would be to: (a) encourage the analysis and use of data to better understand possible relationships among variables, such as those between the increasing access to water and environmental sanitation and the incidence of diarrhoeal diseases among children; (b) conduct the MIC-type surveys at regular intervals as part of a sustainable system of gathering data for monitoring key child indicators; (c) broaden the scope of special surveys to verify achievement of the World Summit for Children goals for the year 2000; and

- (d) strengthen monitoring of the situation of children as part of States Parties' commitment to realizing child rights.

PROGRAMME EVALUATIONS

5. For the period 1996-1997, country offices in the region have reported over 100 studies. These include about 45 evaluations and a number of studies such as situation analyses, action research, needs assessment for formulating project strategies and plans, and reports on annual and mid-term reviews (MTRs). About one quarter of the studies relate to child health, followed by 13 to 15 per cent each to education, water and environmental sanitation, and nutrition. Some 3 to 8 per cent of the studies examine issues in each of the following programme areas: HIV/AIDS, children in need of special protection, gender, communication and credit/income-generating activities.
6. This report presents four examples of programme evaluations conducted in three country offices in 1996-1997: the water and environmental sanitation programme in the Lao People's Democratic Republic; a project to provide educational subsidies to working children and street children in the Philippines; and a micro-credit programme for poor women and a Facts for Life communication project in Viet Nam. They have been selected to indicate how evaluation findings are being used in country programmes through the mechanisms of annual reviews and MTRs, and in the preparation of new country programmes. They also indicate how programme strategy mixes are being adjusted in support of Governments' plans and programmes for achieving the year 2000 goals and for fulfilling the stipulations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
7. Increasingly, it is being recognized that programme strategies in early- to mid-1990s for achieving the mid-decade goals called for a goal-oriented policy, planning and mobilization process combined with the strengthening of government capacities for delivering basic services such as immunization. The process of achieving the year 2000 goals and adopting a child rights approach in country programmes, on the other hand, is more complex and challenging. Achievement of the year 2000 goals not only calls for the strategies shown to be effective for achieving the mid-decade goals, but also requires strengthening capacities of local government agencies; collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other partners; and community organization, participation and management. It also requires improved knowledge, skills and attitudinal changes for informed behavioural choices among children and youth, men, women and families; strengthened information and communication; improved monitoring and evaluation; and mobilization of national and local resources.
8. The four programme evaluations included in the present report reflect some of the efforts being made to redefine programme plans within the child rights framework by more clearly recognizing basic services as children's legitimate claims. They also include attempts to reach out to the unreached and the poorer children, women and families; and to plan and implement programmes for realizing children's rights not only for survival and development, but also for protection and participation.

Water and environmental sanitation programme
in the Lao People's Democratic Republic

9. The rural water supply and environmental sanitation programme in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, funded by the Swedish International Development Authority from 1993 to 1997, was evaluated in 1996. The evaluation methodology included field visits to seven provinces, a review of documents and extensive discussions with relevant government and NGO partners. The study found that access to improved water supply had increased from 15 per cent of the rural population in 1992 to 40 per cent in 1996 at a very modest cost of \$3 per capita. The programme made improved latrines available to 20 per cent of the rural population in 1996 compared to just 5 per cent in 1992. NAM SAAT, the National Water Supply and Environmental Health Programme of the Ministry of Health was designated as the "undisputed lead agent in rural water supply and sanitation" at provincial and district levels. Training had helped to strengthen NAM SAAT's institutional capacity at the provincial level although not at the district level. The evaluation team noted a lack of ownership of the water and environmental sanitation programme within NAM SAAT, as well as a lack of coordination among supporting agencies at the central level.

10. At the community level, the report pointed out that (a) baseline data had been poorly collected at the beginning of the project; (b) gender issues were not taken fully into consideration in the planning process; (c) an appropriate strategy for health education had not been devised; (d) the use and maintenance of water facilities and latrines had not received sufficient attention; and (e) the promotion of hygienic and preventive health practices had not been planned effectively.

11. In response to the evaluation findings, some immediate steps were taken in late 1996 and 1997 as the country programme cycle (1992-1997) was coming to a close and the new country programme was being planned: (a) a national plan of action for water and environmental sanitation for 1998-2002 was prepared with support from the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, UNICEF and other partners; (b) resources were allocated for surveys and studies; (c) water and sanitation committees were established; (d) integrated water, sanitation and hygiene education activities were planned for follow-up by the committees; (e) improved designs for water and sanitation facilities were promoted, with greater attention to gender and environmental concerns; and (f) a pilot project in primary school sanitation was launched with a deliberate strategy to introduce sanitary and hygienic practices among children and to disseminate information and knowledge from child to child, child to family, and children to community.

12. The new country programme of cooperation for 1998-2002, approved by the Executive Board in September 1997, has also incorporated a number of lessons learned from the evaluation of this programme. For example, it includes a greater focus on: (a) institutional capacity-building of NAM SAAT; (b) increased community participation in the planning, use and management of water and sanitation facilities; (c) expansion of the primary school sanitation project and closer linkages between the school and the community; (d) increased attention to equity in service delivery to some of the remote and poorest areas of the country; (e) the development of indicators, case studies, annual reviews and programme adjustments based on findings; (f) closer collaboration with mass organizations such as the Lao Women's Union, youth associations and village development committees; (g) advocacy with the national Government to increase budgetary allocations and staff support; and (h) improved coordination between

national partners and supporting agencies through joint planning, reviews and evaluations, as well as joint support for establishing clear policies, regulations, standards and monitoring.

Programme of educational subsidies for working children and street children in the Philippines

13. The direct provision of educational subsidies is one of several interventions targeting children and youth in need of special protection in the Philippines. It is one of the components of the urban basic services programme (UBSP), which has evolved and expanded considerably over the past two programme periods. The programme has reached increasing numbers of cities, poorer urban communities and families; links have been established with national policies and plans; and the programme has incorporated the street children and working children programmes in a multisectoral and holistic manner. In the current country programme (1994-1997), an amount of some 5 million pesos (approximately \$142,000) was provided for educational subsidies for 6,710 children and youth in primary and secondary schools. The UBSP includes other programme activities at family and community levels such as health services and education, leadership training, parent effectiveness seminars, recreational activities for children and community organization.

14. The evaluation was conducted by an external team of Filipino consultants in mid-1997 as part of the preparation of the new programme of cooperation (1999-2003). The purpose was "to assess the effectiveness and sustainability of educational strategies to curb violations of the right to education among children in especially difficult circumstances". In the context of the Philippine country programme, this involved strategies to improve access and participation of street children and working children in urban public schools. In addition to meetings with government, NGOs and UNICEF staff, and a review of programme documents, the team conducted field exercises in Olongapo, Pasay and Manila. Interviews and focused group meetings were conducted with some 60 respondents, including children, parents, community volunteers, members of parents' committees, officers of community organizations in the UBSP and local NGOs. Field visits were conducted to prepare case studies on best practices in the use of educational subsidies, community mobilization and organization, formal vocational-technical education, and school-based livelihood training.

15. The evaluation showed a fairly even distribution of subsidies between girls and boys, and between elementary and secondary school children. Among child workers, almost 70 per cent of the recipients of educational subsidies had reduced the number of hours worked, or stopped working altogether. The study highlighted the contribution of UBSP to community organization and empowerment, which helped to establish an enabling environment for addressing the issues of working children and street children. It also identified the following achievements: (a) enhanced awareness among parents of the value of education; (b) greater child-youth participation and confidence, attributed partly to the prestige of being "UBSP-UNICEF Scholars"; (c) a greater awareness of child rights among children and parents; and (d) enhancement of children's life skills. One respondent said, "I am only a carpenter and my wife a scavenger. I never dreamt that my child (a girl) would be able to reach high school". Some interviews with children showed that where previously they had been shy and felt ashamed of being street children or working children, they now felt better able to realize their potential, develop their talents and capabilities, assert their rights and relate with confidence to the school environment and agency officials.

16. Some of the best practices identified by the evaluation team are "characterized by (a) an understanding of the dynamics of individual, group and organizational development, particularly in the family and other primary groups; (b) community involvement in preventive care practices, treatment and rehabilitation; (c) maximized resources including funds generated from local sources; (d) a formal (community) structure that can exert social pressure, organizational discipline, and provide support; (e) [the involvement of] prime movers and innovators; and (f) pre-set criteria". The study also pointed out some weaknesses in implementation such as inadequacy of data on the situation of children and women and on performance indicators, and delays in making payments to children due to the number of steps involved in the system as well as delays in liquidating advances made by UNICEF.

17. The evaluation reinforces the argument that relatively small amounts of funds can have an important catalytic impact on promoting the rights of poorer children by helping them to gain access to basic services. Providing minimum support to poorer families - just the amount needed to enable children to go to school - reflects a strategy that avoids dependence and promotes family and local community effort. Coming from UNICEF, such support can promote coordination between the family and the community, between local NGOs and city government, and between local government and national Government. It should also be noted that this project is part of a multi-year programme of working children and street children and UBSP; that the programme has established direct linkages between child labour and education at project implementation level and has used it for advocacy through demonstration at the national policy level; and that child rights principles are being integrated into the country programme in a meaningful way. Lessons learned from this and other evaluations in the Philippines in 1996-1997 are expected to be taken into consideration in the preparation of the new country programme for children (1999-2003).

Micro-credit scheme for women in Viet Nam

18. The income-generation activities and Facts for Life communication project, part of UNICEF support to micro-credit in Viet Nam since 1993, combines credit for poor women with the dissemination of health and child care messages from Facts for Life. Other micro-credit projects in the country programme have been linked with the promotion of literacy, nutrition, water and sanitation. The project, managed by the Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU), has provided small loans to some 46,130 rural women in 151 communes in 22 of the 61 provinces in Viet Nam. Loans of about \$30 are made available to women in local groups of 15-16 members. Default rates are very low, as groups monitor loans and provide assistance to those having difficulties with payments. The women meet on a monthly basis to recover loan installments and discuss MCH, nutrition and child care using Facts for Life materials.

19. The objective of the evaluation was to assess the impact of credit in the fourth cycle of loans and of health/nutrition messages on the lives of women and families. Two communes in Hai Phong and Lang Son provinces were selected for a participatory evaluation carried out in September 1997 by 25 government and UNICEF staff and an external consultant. The methodology included interviews with provincial- and commune-level steering committees of the VWU, group discussions with borrowers, the preparation of 15 case studies, weighing a sample of children, surveying a random sample of 50 borrowers, and collection of data on several child development indicators.

20. In the rapidly improving economic environment in Viet Nam it is difficult to attribute the generally positive changes in the situations of families solely to the project. Nevertheless, a significant improvement in family income and the situation of children and women was noted. Credit as an entry point for ensuring the survival, development and protection of children and empowerment of women appears to have been a cost-effective measure, considering the direct project cost of \$20 per household over the four-year project cycle. Improvements were reported in the nutritional status of children, in the number of sanitary facilities and their use, and in school attendance of children. Group solidarity and self-confidence were promoted through participation in group meetings. Peer support through this process was cited by women participants as a valuable instrument of progress.

21. The evaluation showed that VWU has managed effective advocacy campaigns and that women participants have gained better knowledge and now use better practices in child care, nutrition and family spacing. The evaluation team, however, noted a lack of diversification in the use of loan funds and recommended linkages with agricultural extension agencies for skills training for alternative investments of loans. Recognizing the rapid growth of the local banking system in making small loans available to people without collateral, the team recommended a further review of the micro-credit strategy for linking borrowers with the local financial institutions and for shifting micro-credit support to the most marginalized communities and the poorest women and families.

22. Based on the evaluation findings, UNICEF inputs in 1998 will focus on strengthening the management capacity of VWU through the provision of professional expertise and technical support. The programme focus will shift from loan funds to a stronger communication strategy through the increasingly powerful women's networks of loan groups. VWU will be encouraged and supported to act as an effective link between the rapidly growing formal credit system and women's groups, and as a promoter of messages to improve health, nutrition and child care knowledge and practices. The MTR of the country programme in 1998 is expected to provide further opportunities for the Government and UNICEF to use the evaluation findings to further refine programme strategies during the second half of the programme cycle.

Facts for Life communication programme in Viet Nam

23. An evaluation of the communication project disseminating Facts for Life messages to women and families has been implemented in Viet Nam by VWU since 1989 with UNICEF support. Over 2.7 million women and their families in 19 provinces have been reached through the project, including a number of women involved in the micro-credit project noted above, and a wider audience has been reached through various channels of communication such as songs, poems, riddles, short plays, speeches and discussion groups. VWU organized activities at the commune level in various combinations, including: training women leaders; organizing group meetings and literacy training sessions; using existing mass media and indigenous community media forms; organizing healthy mother and child contests and competitions to test knowledge among users of Facts for Life, including women, men and grandparents; and promoting interpersonal communication, information dissemination and dialogue.

24. The purpose of the evaluation in June 1997 was to assess the promotion and coverage of Facts for Life and to further analyse the impact of its messages on knowledge acquisition and behaviour changes among women and their families in four provinces participating in the micro-credit scheme. The evaluation

methodology included meetings with members of the provincial and commune steering committees in the four selected provinces, responses to questionnaires from some NGOs and other provinces participating in the promotion of Facts for Life, meetings with UNICEF staff and a review of documents.

25. The evaluation report indicated that "the effects of Facts for Life communication on behavioural change in health has undoubtedly been overwhelmingly positive, albeit to different degrees in different project areas... . The overriding response to Facts for Life was praise for its practicality and relevance to their lives". While variations in the use and effectiveness of Facts for Life messages among communes were clearly identified, improvements were noted in families' responses to child immunization, tetanus toxoid immunization for pregnant women, and the use of iodized salt. Specific practices adopted as a result of learning about Facts for Life included: (a) early breast-feeding (i.e. of the colostrum) to newborns in spite of resistance from parents or in-laws based on their traditional beliefs; (b) the introduction of supplementary foods and continued breast-feeding for up to two years; (c) an increase in the number and frequency of prenatal check-ups; (d) birth spacing; (e) the use of oral rehydration salts and continuous feeding, and avoidance of anti-diarrhoeals during bouts of diarrhoea; and (f) boiling drinking water. Husbands showed a greater degree of interest in the chapter on HIV/AIDS, while women were more interested in topics directly affecting them in their local situations.

26. The evaluation pointed out that when local project steering committees showed a greater interest in Facts for Life communication, creative and culturally appropriate techniques were used and that its adaptation of in styles and forms suitable to local situations increased its effectiveness. When Facts for Life was integrated into other group activities, such as the management of micro-credit, it made a greater impact. The function of Facts for Life as a communication and mobilization tool for information, knowledge, health and child care practices was evident from the work of VWU. The Union's institutional capacity, as indicated by the evaluation report, needs to be further enhanced, particularly for reaching ethnic minorities, through (a) the adaptation of communication materials to meet their needs; (b) a decentralized process for developing materials; and (c) upgrading members' skills in interactive and participatory communication. While noting the use of multiple techniques and channels of Facts for Life communication in the programme, the evaluation recommended a further widening of networks with NGOs, schools and media, in addition to recommending direct linkages of Facts for Life communication to other UNICEF-assisted programmes for children and women. The mid-1998 MTR of the country programme will provide opportunities for making appropriate adjustments in the communication strategies.

EXPERIENCE IN STRENGTHENING MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN THE REGION

Multi-country teams and studies of safe motherhood in the region

27. In addition to the studies and evaluations at country level, the RMT has established a number of intercountry "flexi-teams" to review experiences in selected programme areas such as decentralization, community participation and local capacity-building; reduction of protein-energy malnutrition; education; child protection; and reduction of maternal mortality. Representatives and/or programme officers have volunteered to work as members of the teams based on their interests and technical expertise, and regional advisors in

health/nutrition, education and child protection have provided technical and secretariat support to the teams. Reports on the ongoing work of the teams are provided to the RMT at its regular meetings.

28. This report presents one example of the work of the RMT in safe motherhood for learning lessons from country experience (with or without UNICEF assistance) in the region, and for formulating appropriate programme strategies to reduce maternal mortality in countries at various stages of economic and social development. Recognizing Malaysia's achievement in reducing its maternal mortality rate (MMR) from 150 per 100,000 live births in 1970 to 50 by the mid-1990s, an in-depth case study of the Malaysian experience was conducted in 1997. Case studies of other country experiences were also prepared to identify achievements and gaps, strengths and weaknesses of national programmes. These studies were presented and discussed at regional and global meetings on safe motherhood in 1997.

29. The comparative analysis led to a classification of countries in the region into four groups: countries with "low" MMRs (below 100 per 100,000 live births); "medium" (between 100 and 200); "high" (between 200 and 650); and "very high" (above 650). This analysis is beginning to provide further insights into the possible direct and underlying causes of maternal mortality in the region; the types and quality of safe motherhood services being provided; and programme strategy mixes that can be promoted for achieving the MMR goal in each country. The analysis has identified key characteristics determining MMR achievements such as: (a) the level of development in health infrastructure, particularly regarding access to and use of maternal health services; (b) the overall reproductive health and nutritional status of women; (c) educational achievement, women's age at first delivery, number of deliveries, proportion of unsafe and illegal abortions, and violence against women; and (d) the country's stage of overall socio-economic development.

30. Based on the regional analysis and meetings, a "safe motherhood programme package" is being developed for further discussion, advocacy and appropriate application to country situations. It proposes various strategy mixes at family and community levels, including promotion of nutrition among women and adolescent girls, especially adequate intake of calories, vitamin A, iron and zinc; promotion of water and environmental sanitation; reproductive health, including recognition of risks during pregnancy and family spacing; protection from sexual abuse and violence; and promotion of women's empowerment, including female literacy, life skills education and credit schemes for greater control over resources. Interventions at the health worker/community interface level include midwife, traditional birth attendant and other front-line worker assistance in safe delivery, timely referral and outreach to households with essential MCH services; training, supervision, licensing and motivation among workers; and affordable transport and communication systems. At the health system level, MCH and other reproductive health services, including case management and prevention of HIV/AIDS, information on family spacing and the consequences of unsafe abortions are to be promoted, combined with emergency obstetric care and prevention and treatment of common health problems of women at health centres. This list makes it clear that none of these interventions alone can make an impact; that a comprehensive, multisectoral approach to women's reproductive health is required; and that a strong political commitment at all levels will enable countries to accelerate the reduction of MMR in the region and ensure that women's right to health will be respected.

Programme audits and mid-term reviews

31. A new methodology for the audit of programme management was introduced by the Office of Internal Audit in the Jakarta and Hanoi country offices in 1997. The aim was to identify the principal risks to the achievement of major programme objectives and to assess the risk management practices introduced by the country offices to manage those risks. The audits were participatory in nature, involving a joint team from the audit and the country offices. An attempt will be made to conduct additional programme audits in countries that are preparing MTRs in 1998 in recognition of links between the two forms of programme assessments.

32. Based on the team's recommendations, the Jakarta country office is strengthening intersectoral coordination, planning processes, and monitoring and evaluation. In the Hanoi country office, the exercise recommended increased attention to the area-focused approach and a greater priority on technical capacity-building among government counterparts. Both offices are committed to moving forward on the recommendations by the time of their MTRs. The regional monitoring and evaluation officer participated in the programme audit in Hanoi. The regional office and the RMT are reviewing the scope for further collaboration in the implementation of programme audits in 1998.

Programme evaluations and mid-term reviews

33. MTRs of five large and complex country programmes (Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Myanmar and Viet Nam) will be conducted in 1998. While the country offices are beginning to prepare for the country-level MTRs together with their respective government partners, the regional office and the RMT have initiated a dialogue to: (a) assist in the preparation of integrated monitoring and evaluation plans at country and regional levels; (b) generate a process of intercountry exchanges within the region, based on country office needs for technical support; (c) gather country office plans for programme evaluations in preparation for the MTRs; (d) explore possible themes for multi-country thematic evaluations; and (e) devise regional mechanisms for gathering, analysing and using relevant information on evaluations of country programmes in the region in consultation with the programme and evaluation teams at headquarters. These efforts are expected to contribute to strengthening the capacities of UNICEF and its programme partners for evaluation of country programmes of cooperation and for monitoring the situation of children and women in the region.
